

# Round in Circles

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Summary: Rachel hasn't been back to her hometown of Baltimore in 5 years. That is until Jack Barakat calls to tell her that her childhood bestfriend is going through hell. Alex Gaskarth/OC Rated M for language and sexual themes to come.

## 1. Chapter 1

I stood in front of the house that I grew up coming to my entire childhood. From childhood play dates, to carpools for schools, all the way to proms and even high school graduation. The Gaskarth house had always been home number two for me, sometimes even my only home. I had been welcomed with open arms into the family for longer than I can really remember. So why was I so nervous now? It had been 5 years since I had last been here, last seen the boy who made my 16 year old self swoon. College had taken me south, and after the way my time in Baltimore had ended, I was not eager to return. Nothing but these people tied me to this place anymore. My family had moved up to New York, and Baltimore was just not on my list of places to visit.

That, however, had changed when I got a call from one Jack Barakat. It had been ages since we had really talked, but in true Jack fashion, that first phone call in 5 years felt like we had never stopped being best friends. He expressed concern about the one person whose name could still bring me to tears. Alex. According to Jack, he was exhibiting signs of bad anxiety and even more severe depression. His girlfriend since High School had left him due to his reckless behaviors, and he was not taking it well. Jack contacted me both as someone close to Alex and as a psychologist. I had just graduated college with my degree in psychology, and he apparently found out from my big sister. I could not possibly turn down this return trip to my old stomping grounds, especially after the second call came in from Zach Merrick.

Zach and I had a pretty interesting past. We had gone on a few dates and just clicked very naturally. He called expressing both concern

for Alex and the desire to see me, and that was enough to warrant me sitting in my car now, looking at my childhood with a nervous lump in my throat. I was pulled out of my thoughts by a small tap on my window. I jumped, but immediately smiled after seeing the familiar sandy blond grinning at me from outside the car. Zach looked better than ever, with muscles visible under his sweater and the remnants of a summer tan. It was November, which can get pretty chilly in Baltimore, so I made sure to grab my scarf and loop it around my neck before hopping out of the car and giving Zach a big hug. Warmth immediately surrounded me and his arms felt like home. Nothing beats that feeling, and I was optimistic of my visit after feeling how normal Zack was with me.

"Hey Ray" he said, "long time no see."

"Tell me about it, dude. It has been too long since I saw you last. You have gained about a thousand new muscles and cut off a ton of hair"

Zack grinned then, and picked me up for another hug. Then, a grunt from the doorway woke me out of my perfect little bliss, and sent me right back into the discomfort that had caused me to stay away for so long. Alex stood at the door of his childhood home, with his arms folded across his chest and a very unpleasant look on his face.

"If this is my surprise I think I would like to send it back, I don't have time for this right now." He quipped, scowling at the ground.

"Dude," Zack spoke harshly, very obviously not happy with Alex's tone. Alex just shrugged and avoided eye contact with me. Zack looped his arm around my waist and hugged me tight. I just sat there and stared at the boy who could always make me shiver in my boots. But I was a grown up now, and a professional, so civility was key. "Hello Alex, nice to see you again." I spoke confidently, and held my composure as he snorted and walked back into the house. Zack tensed at my side, but I squeezed his arm so he knew that I was okay. For once in my life I was ready to face Alexander William Gaskarth head on.

## 2. Chapter 2

"Ray, what would I do without you?" Alex spoke softly, pushing back my hair and kissing my forehead before adjusting my graduation cap and grinning his signature smile.

"Oh I don't know, probably die," I quipped with an equally large grin on my face.

This was the day. I was finally graduating, and I could join my best friends on tour with their band. I was ecstatic. Turning down scholarships for college didn't really seem like a win for my family, but I loved these boys, and I wanted to be there for them every step of the way to their eventual fame. Alex smiled at me again and hugged me tight, lingering more than usual. I wrote it off as excitement, but I secretly loved every single second of that hug. As Alex pulled away, he stopped short at my face and pecked my lips with a small kiss. I tensed and had no clue what to do. Suddenly we were folded into each other, and kissing like it was the only way to breathe. His

tongue gently parted my lips, and I followed his lead. Nothing could make this moment bad; nothing but the loud gasp of Alex's girlfriend coming to find him.

We both parted quicker than we had ever moved, and Lisa broke down in tears. She looked at us both with so much hurt in her eyes, I instantly regretted everything. After what felt like forever of staring in shock, Lisa ran off, and Alex had no hesitation of running after her. I was in so much shock that I had no idea what to do, so I just walked back to my graduating class and sat through the ceremony without a word or movement. After the ceremony, the entire band, along with their parents, came to hug me and congratulate me; all of them but Alex.

When I inquired about him, everyone just looked at me with a solemn look on their faces. That is when I was informed that Alex had made the decision that he did not want me on tour with them. After hearing that, I was on a one track mission to find Alex, and confront him about this very bad and very sudden news. I found him outside, sitting on the curb with his head in his hands.

"What the hell, Gaskarth," I huffed, letting all of the frustration boil to the top.

"Not now, Rachel. I've made up my mind."

"So you're going to kiss meâ€|LIKE THATâ€|then revoke my invitation without talking to me? I didn't realize you were such a coward. This isn't even your call is it? It's Lisa's! I mean of course she's upset but this is my future we're talking about, dude!"

Alex lost it then. He called me all the names he could think of. He blamed me for his relationship troubles, the troubles in the band, and all of his personal struggles. He told me that he never wanted to see me again, and that I wasn't worth anything to him. I rocked back on my heels at the verbal attack, and felt tears welling up in my eyes. Alex had always had this effect on me. He had my heart in his hands, and he could crush it with a few words. I turned then, away from my friend and my first love, and went to find my parents. I was leaving Baltimore as fast as possible. My hero had let me down. Nothing else mattered to me anymore.

### 3. Chapter 3

After that first interaction with Alex, I chickened out about going inside, and asked Zack to take me for some coffee instead. He graciously agreed, and helped me into his car. I was shaking from head to toe, both with sadness and anger. It was obvious that Alex still believed all of the things that he had said, and that I was the last person he wanted to see. I tried to block all of that out as we pulled up to my favorite local coffee shop.

"Oh Zack, you remembered how much I loved Songbird."

I was giddy with excitement at getting some caffeine and catching up with the handsome man in front of me. He was 2 years older than me, but he had never treated me as a little kid like Rian and Jack had. They saw me as a little sister, but I had always known Zack had seen me as something more. He opened the door to the coffee shop and my

mouth immediately started to water. The smell of fresh coffee and pastries filled my nose and a small tear rolled down my cheek as I thought about the many nights I spent here reading and writing. Zack, without a word, ordered my favorites, and we settled into a small booth that was secluded from all of the others.

"So," Zack started, looking into my eyes and smiling a toothy grin, "what is the great Rachel Prince doing now days? You get even more beautiful with age, you know."

I blushed and sipped on my coffee before speaking.

"Well, I am a recent college graduate. Looking for a job as a therapist, raising two cats, and trying like hell to stay young looking through all the stress of adulthood."

Zack laughed. "You really look great Ray, I am so glad to see you with a tan, and is that a tiny bit of a southern accent I hear? You've changed Prince."

I blushed and looked down into my coffee. It felt so normal to be sitting here with Zack like this, and it secretly made me long for a chance to have gotten to know him for the past 5 years. He had always been a sweet, old soul, but now he seemed so much more confident and strong. It was very attractive. I was pulled from my thoughts by a familiar set of boney arms wrapping around my neck, and a very tattooed set of arms grabbing me by the waist. Suddenly, Rian and Jack had me hoisted in the air and were swinging me back and forth while chanting my name. I giggled, and Zack smiled at my obvious joy at seeing my old friends. After they put me down, they ordered some coffee and sat down next to me in the booth, squeezing in tight. Rian pulled my hair and Jack poked my ribs, and I felt home. It was just like old times; my brothers were here and they were showing me love the way they knew how.

"Surprised you came back Rach," Rian said as he tickled me, "I don't think I would have if I were you."

"Me either," Jack chimed in, "especially not for that asshole we call a singer."

I smiled and Zack relayed the incident from earlier, to which Jack rolled his eyes and Rian said a few curses under his breath.

"See why we need you, Prince" Jack asked with more frustration that I am used to seeing from him. "He is out of control."

I nodded and explained that I was happy to help, even if we had some unresolved issues. I wasn't scared of him anymore. I couldn't be scared, because he needed me, just like he always did. I had to get him off of his sinking ship.

#### 4. Chapter 4

After some more coffee, I felt I was ready to face my demon, and try to help him. Zack drove me back to Alex's while Jack and Rian followed. When we got there, the guys backed me up and I took a deep breath before opening the door. The house was the same as it was when I left, give or take a few recent All Time Low posters. I knew

exactly where Alex would be, so I went straight for the basement. The rest of the guys asked if I wanted them to come with me, but I hesitantly said that I was going to go it alone. I opened the door and could hear Alex singing and playing the guitar. I took a deep breath and descended the familiar stairs. As Alex heard me coming, he stopped singing and just started playing a song that was way too familiar to my ears. Jasey Rae came out of the acoustic guitar and I had to stop and gain my composure. He wrote this song a few months after I had left, and had emailed it to me, in one last hit to my heart. I felt tears welling my eyes, but was caught in the arms of Zack almost immediately.

"Oops, didn't hear you coming." Alex said with no emotion in his voice.

Anger boiled in my veins and I shook Zach off with reassurance that I was fine.

"Okay, Alex, time to talk to me. I'm here because Zack, Rian and Jack, not anything else, so let's keep this professional."

Alex scoffed and looked over at me with disdain. "And how the fuck do you expect to help me? You haven't been around in 5 years."

"I'm a licensed psychologist, dummy." He turned to me then, and reluctantly patted the seat next to him.

I reached for Zack's hand, and squeezed to tell him that I was okay. He sighed, but went up the stairs, leaving me to deal with my ex best friend. I settled myself in a bean bag chair across from Alex and pulled out my notepad. He grinned at that, and crossed his arms over his chest.

"Someone means business," He quipped, "How nice of you to come ready to take notes about my fucked up situation."

"This is strictly professional, Gaskarth, so check your ego."

"Fine, fine. Geez, you're so sensitive. Guess nothing has changed."

"Well at least I'm not hiding out in my parent's basement," I snapped. Unprepared for what was going to happen next.

## 5. Chapter 5

Alex's walls came crashing down in a fashion I was never prepared for from him. First his hand raised to me, as to smack me for my callous words, but he lowered it after a short pause and tears welled up in his eyes. I was shocked, to say the least, and had no time to react before he was kneeling before me, sobbing into the sleeve of his hoodie.

"Oh, my God—Alex—" I was at a loss for words, he had never bawled like this in front of me.

"She kicked me out. She left me with nothing and it's all my fault. I don't have a choice but to be here. Lisa left and broke my heart, just like I deserve. God, I'm a dick—"

"Alex, c'mon, pull it together." I couldn't bear the thought of touching him, so I firmly grasped my pen and pad.

He laid his head on my knee and kept crying. Something happened when we had physical contact, and I froze. He could have asked me to dance around like a monkey and I would have done it. Nothing felt warm or fuzzy, but there was an obvious spark that seemed almost electric. He must have felt it too, because he finally raised his head and looked at me in the eyes for the first time.

"Ray, it's so good to see you again."

"I wish I could agree," I sighed, "but I am only here to help the guys."

This seemed to knock him back another notch, and I saw the tears welling up again. I sighed and stood up, unable to take it anymore. Being around Alex was harder than I had imagined. Part of me still very much loved him, but another part wanted to punch him for all of the hurt, all of the therapy, and all of the medication I had to take to function like a normal person. It was all his fault, and he had no clue what he had done to me. I needed a hug!

## 6. Chapter 6

I walked back up the stairs to find the Zack was the only one left. He was concerned when I had told him what had happened, and even more concerned when he found out just how much I had gone through in the time that I had been away from Baltimore. We heard loud singing from downstairs, and I felt myself getting a headache from the events of the day. I asked Zack to drive me to my hotel, and was so happy that he agreed. Zack was a pretty silent person, so the ride there was quiet. He would gently ask me questions like "do you need food" and offered more than once to have me stay with him. I explained that I was getting paid by the Gaskarth family to stay in the hotel, and that I needed some space to figure out the best plan of action.

That didn't stop Zack from opening my door at the entrance to the hotel, and kissing me gently on the forehead before driving off and leaving me to my thoughts. I checked in and found out that the Gaskarth family had put me up in a suite. Thankful for the extra space, I took the key and trekked to my room. Waiting for me was the most beautiful room I had ever seen, decorated with sunflowers. There was a bottle of wine waiting for me as well, and a note attached. Thanks for coming, even if you didn't want to see me.

I still remember your favorite things, never forget that. "Alex

I looked around at the beautiful flowers and sighed as I opened the wine. It was indeed my favorite, but this was too much. I sipped at the glass out of habit, and decided I just really needed to relax. Luckily, there was a tub the size of small boat, and plenty of bath bubbles. I started the warm water and sighed and I finished my first glass of wine. Pouring another, I stepped into the bath and let the stress of the wash off of me. Alex was obviously hurt, confused, and needed help, but was I really the best choice for that help? Could I really make such a difference for someone who had told me to my face he never wanted to see me? I suppose only time could really

tell.

## 7. Chapter 7

After I finished the bottle of wine, I decided I needed some more drinks, so I got dressed in some dark jeans and a green blouse, put on my boots and jacket, and got an Uber. It was cooler out than when I had come back to the hotel, but I didn't mind the cold. My skin was warm from drinking. When the Uber arrived I asked to be dropped off at one of my favorite bars on South Broadway. It was small and cozy, which is exactly what I missed about Baltimore. As I sat down, a nice looking bartender came up and asked my order. I asked him for a beer, and we held a decently long conversation about craft beers. His name was Caleb, and I was glad to have made a friend. That was until his girlfriend walked up to the bar and sat next to me. She was as beautiful as I remembered, with dirty blonde hair and a fit figure. She was shorter, but it wasn't obvious when she strapped herself into the heels she was wearing.

Lisa Ruocco stood next to me, and softly kissed my new friend Caleb. I tried to leave then, but Caleb insisted that I "meet" his beautiful girlfriend. Lisa's shock when she saw me was enough to make me blush and step back a few inches, fearing she would swing at me, but all she did was tear up and pull me into a big hug. I was frozen in pure surprise, but was finally able to relax into her hug. It was nice, Lisa and I had been great friends in our youth. She was always the one the boys wanted, and I was very shy and awkward, but we had a great time together when we hung out.

"Oh my gosh, Rachel! What are you doing here?" She asked, looking at me with wonder.

"Uhm, just visiting," I lied, not wanting to explain the real truth, especially after meeting Caleb.

She seemed satisfied with that answer and asked me to have a beer with her. I agreed and we sat down to catch up. She told me that she was doing great, and that she and Caleb had been together for a few months now. They had bought a dog, named Beaux, and were looking into moving in together. That's when I noticed the ring on her finger and realized why Alex was so messed up as of late, Lisa was engaged. She had moved on so quickly, and neither Alex's ego or heart were taking that well. I had to give it to Lisa though, Caleb was very attractive, and after hearing he had inherited the bar from his parents, I concluded that he was pretty accomplished. Of course, after a few beers I was a little more curious, and couldn't keep myself from asking the dangerous question.

"So, like, what the fuck happened with Alex?" I slurred, hoping sober me would remember the things she said in the morning.

When I asked, she got sad, and I started to feel bad. Caleb patted her back and coaxed her into telling me.

"You weren't the only time he has had eyes for other girls over the years, and I finally got over handling it. He was also so reckless, and would do things that would put him in danger. I wanted marriage, and a family, ya know, something more than drinking and partying and sleeping in a tiny bunk."

I nodded and then began to cry. I never thought that I would be face to face with Lisa ever again. If you had asked me in high school, I would have said she was one of my best friends, but when Alex and I kissed, I felt like she would always hate me. Finding out that she didn't was such a huge shock, but I was relieved at the same time. She hugged me and told me not to cry, that she knew we had both had feelings for Alex. She said if it wasn't for me, she would have never found Caleb and fallen in love again. She said she would always be my friend, and then helped me up and out of the bar. Before she left, she programmed her number into my phone, and asked me to call her sometime. I blubbered a "yes" as she loaded me into my Uber, and cried all the way back to my hotel. Falling into my bed for the night, my sobs subsided and I fell into a troubled, restless sleep.

## 8. Chapter 8

I woke up the next morning to someone jumping on my bed. I groaned and tried to ignore it, until I realized that someone jumping on my bed meant there was a stranger in my room. I flailed around at this realization and screamed, until a flash of skunk hair caught my eyes. Oh thank God, it was only Jack.

"How the fuck did you get in here, Barakat" I hissed, pushing him off of the bed.

He caught himself, and plopped down next to me on the bed.

"You're lover boy Zack sent me to keep you company today."

"Shouldn't I be back with Alex, trying to do my job?" Jack put his hand over my mouth then.

"Less talky, more getting ready, we're going out today." I rolled my eyes as Jack pushed me to the bathroom.

After a long shower, I put on a black hoodie and some black leggings before I threw on a purple scarf and heading out to get my boots. Jack was eating room service, and I stole a few pieces of bacon off of his plate before grabbing my own. He stuck his tongue out at me, but didn't protest. Home Alone had occupied his mind. As I ate, I answered some emails and did my hair and makeup. My long red hair was hidden in a beanie after I straightened it, and I put on more makeup than usual. My dress affected my mood, and I wasn't in the best of them today. Jack saw my attire and laughed at me for being "emo". I smacked him and pulled him up.

"Entertain me," I laughed.

"First stop, an old favorite." I groaned at that, thinking of all the places we went as kids and teenagers.

Of course, I wasn't disappointed as Jack pulled into the parking lot of our favorite old skating rink. The building was old and the paint was peeling off of it, but there were so many memories here that I couldn't help but be excited to go in. Jack looped his arm around mine and we skipped together into the rink. Nothing had changed at



all, and I was excited to lace up my skates. Jack was already doing circles around me, and singing loudly to the Blink 182 that blasted through the speakers. We went around and around in circles for what felt hours, just enjoying hanging out and making fools of ourselves. I knew I was going to be covered in bruises from falling, but I was having the best time just hanging out with such an old friend. Every now and then Jack would be asked to sign an autograph or take a picture, and it made me so happy to see how successful All Time Low had become. I knew each and every guy in the band worked their asses off, and it made me proud to see them succeed.

Soon Jack was pulling me to the bench our shoes where on, despite my protest, and told me it was time for lunch. I realized then how hungry I was and took the skates off as quickly as possible. We got back in the car then, and Jack made me close my eyes before driving us to the secret lunch location he had picked out. We pulled up to the sandwich stand and I almost screamed in excitement. I had missed out on the famous "Raven" which was a huge meat sandwich in Baltimore. "Jack Barakat, you are my hero" I smiled and hugged him after we got out of the car. The smells was enticing and soon I had a sandwich and a half eaten. Jack and I talked about Alex the whole time we ate, which sort of put a damper on my mood, but I knew that he was really concerned for his friend. I told him about seeing Lisa the night before, and he seemed to age 10 years during that conversation.

"We're all still friends with her, Rae," He spoke softly, "but Alex thinks she's the devil right now. Obviously she broke his heart, but he's not blameless and you know that."

"I do, trust me. Lisa said there was someone else too, though, besides me?" Jack frowned and I could tell that he wanted to change the subject, but this was stuff I needed to know to help Alex out of his funk, so I pressed on with questioning.

"A girl from another band on tour, Tay, and Alex had a little fling. Word got back to Lis and she totally, rightfully, flipped."

I nodded, knowing this was all the detail that Jack wanted to go into. We left that conversation behind and got back in the car to go meet Rian and Zack for drinks at a bar by the harbor. The bar was very posh, and we had our own VIP table to sit in. I got unlimited beers (which I took advantage of) and talked with my boys about their lives. I found out that Rian had a new sweetie named Cassadee and that she would be coming to town shortly. That made me so excited; I needed new girlfriends. Jack told me about his brother and sister and that they were doing well, and Zack only wanted to know more about me and my life. I showed them pictures of my cute little kittens and of my house in Georgia, and told them about all of my adventures as a college student. They all seemed so interested, and it was nice to share my stories with them. After a while, Zack drove me back to my hotel and asked if he could come up. I said yes, but told him that I had some work to do to prepare for my first hour long session with Alex. He just shrugged and pulled me upstairs. He poured some wine for me, and drew me a hot bath as I got out my notebook and jotted down some notes for tomorrow.

"Enough, Rachel," Zack said sternly, "bath time then bed. I'm sure Jack wore you out today."

"You're not wrong," I laughed.

Before I could protest he was pulling off my hoodie and scarf, and I blushed at feeling his hands lingering over my skin. I was very self-conscious about my weight, but Zack didn't seem to mind or even see my belly or the cellulite in my legs, he just undressed me, and then began to kiss me slowly and softly. The kiss was warm and comforting; a welcome change to all of the drunken make out sessions that naturally occur in college town bars. My hands lingered to his shirt and I tugged it up and over his head before resting my hands on his waist. Soon, the bath was forgotten, and the only thing that mattered in the world was Zack and I.

## 9. Chapter 9

A gentle kiss to the forehead woke me up the next morning and I was both excited and mortified to wake up and see Zack lying in my bed. He was all smiles, obviously remembering the good time we had last night.

"Shitâ€¦" I swore under my breath. "What Rach," He finally registered that I wasn't as happy as he was.

"This just complicates everything and oh my God you had to see me naked and I am SO not ready for a relationship and justâ€¦oh my God what time is it?"

He smirked at my rambling and kissed me reassuringly before telling me it was okay, and that he was just glad to have had that experience with me. Zack was always more of a free spirit, so at least I could put this relationship shit on the back burner. Then, finally, Zack told me the time. It was 11am, and I was supposed to be meeting with Alex in thirty minutes. I let out a strong line of swears, and jumped up to get ready. Zack helped by ordering me coffee and staying out of my way. Finally, about 10 minutes late already, I was ready to leave. I had on a black pant suit with a purple blouse, and my still wet hair was hanging loose around me. I slipped on a pair of heels, grabbed my bag, a coffee and a kiss from Zack, and hurried to my rental car. Soon I was arriving at the office that was letting me rent out a room for mine and Alex's sessions. He was already there, laying across the couch.

"Sorry, I know I'm late," I started, before he put up a hand to stop me.

"I can't complain about my therapist being late because she was getting laid, that sounds like something that I would do. Though a 'hey, I'm fucking Zack' text would have been nice."

"How do you knowâ€¦?"

"Oh, please, Prince. You forget just how well I know you."

He sat up then, and I gasped at how bad he looked. His eyes were bloodshot and he had horrible bags under them. His clothes hung off of him like he had lost weight. I instantly felt bad for sleeping with Zack. Damn, I hated this man.

"Let's just get started shall we," I asked softly, gesturing for him

to sit back down.

He defiantly crossed his arms and scowled, and I knew then I was in for an ear full.

"We will start after you tell me who the fuck you think you are. Seriously Rachel, you shouldn't be fucking with Zack like this, we both know you and him will never work out. You have other people on your mind."

I could feel the anger boiling up inside of me, and tried to just let him talk out his emotions. It was my job to let him talk.

"I mean come on, you're really gonna sleep with a guy you haven't seen in five years because he is nice to you? How desperate can you get?"

He just kept going, spitting the words out like they were poisonous. I sunk into my chair and he followed my lead and sat on the couch. This was already tiring and way too hard.

"Okay, I think I'm done." He smirked.

Knowing he was at the end of his rant, I wiped a few tears from my eyes and launched into the session without skipping a beat. This fact seemed to shock Alex, but he did finally start to talk to me. We talked about Lisa, and this Tay girl, and how things went down. We talked about his brother who he had lost way to soon. We talked about tour and how it affected him, and I felt like I finally was getting somewhere. Alex had a hard life, despite how other people saw him. He struggled with anxiety to an extreme, and the depression of life events was taking its toll on his already overstretched mind. He mentioned Lisa's engagement, and I admitted that I had seen her recently. That's when the conversation took a turn I never wanted it to take, we had to talk about that day.

## 10. Chapter 10

It started with Alex asking if I still remembered the one time we had kissed. I took a deep breath and nodded.

"It was electric, wasn't it?" He smiled softly.

"Yes Alex, but that's not why we're here."

"How many time did you listen to Jasey Rae?"

"You're really gonna make me talk about this, huh?" I asked, feeling the word vomit rolling around in my mouth.

Alex nodded, and, like he knew what was coming, sat back to brace himself.

"Okay, let's get real," I started. "I listened to that song on repeat for months, trying to figure out what the fuck happened. I went to therapy myself, got put on medication for years, finally got off of it, but the first time I saw you again, I felt like I needed to be on it all over again. You make me crazy, but now I'm strong enough to deal with you. You wrecked me for years. You killed me inside. You

took my heart when I left Baltimore, and you haven't done anything to take care of it. You have just yelled at me, degraded me, and made me feeling like the failure I know I am. The session is over, see you in a week."

I stormed out them with tears falling down my face. I couldn't face Alex, I didn't want to. At least now he knew he had destroyed me. I needed to be alone to think, but my phone was blowing up. I screamed as it went off for the tenth time and threw it down on the ground, hoping it would break, but no such luck. Finally I had the clarity to turn it off, and just sat in front of the harbor, watching boats pass. People passed and I watched them too, wondering why my life couldn't be as easy as walking around with a loved one. Why did I have to be such a fuck up? Why did Alex Gaskarth rule my emotions? What happened to me?

Soon it was dark, and I was shaking from the cold. Someone draped a coat over my shoulders, and the smell was enough to tell me who it was. Alex stood behind me, and looked down at his feet.

"How did you find me" I asked, though I knew the answer already. "This is our spot, Rae. I come here all the time when I miss you, I know you miss me, so it just made sense."

"Sit down then," I sniffled, "let's finish this off the record."

He sat then, making sure our legs didn't touch.

"Rachel, I am so sorry, for everything. I never meant to hurt you, but I should have known better. I've always known I was supposed to be your protector, but all I ever did was hurt you."

"I should have never trusted such an arrogant asshole with my heart." I joked, and he laughed softly.

"Yeah, well, I guess I don't really have a comeback for that one," He quipped, "you were the only one who always denied my asshole side."

"Friends?" He asked me, with the first glimpse of hope I had seen in him since I had gotten back to Baltimore.

"Friends," I reassured him. He scooted closer to me and gave me a sideways hug before helping me up and getting me to my rental car.

## 11. Chapter 11

Zack was gone when I got back to my hotel room, and I was glad about that to be totally honest. Today had been exhausting, and all I needed was to shower and sleep. I turned on the water and hopped in, sighing when the warmth hit my skin. Nothing was better than a hot shower after a long day and today was no exception. I soaped up my hair and let the shampoo sit for awhile. Showers weren't my favorite, because I always ended up thinking about how bad my body looked. College had not been kind to me as far as my weight was concerned, and high school had been worse on my arms and legs. White scars laced up my arms and where copied on my thighs. Cutting was an inevitable part of my past and I was ashamed of how it had left my body.

\_Oh well, \_I thought as I rinsed the shampoo, \_I guess the past is in the past.\_

A little while later, I hopped out of the shower and wrapped a towel around my body. My phone was buzzing and I rushed to pick it up.

"Hello," I said while yawning.

"Hey Rae, it's Alex"

"Oh, hey. Did you get home okay?"

He sighed before answering, and I could just see him pushing his blond hair out of his chocolate eyes. I felt myself missing him already even though it had only been a few hours since we parted ways.

"Yeah, walking through the door now."

"So, why are you calling? I mean it's nice to hear from you but we just left each other."

"Well," he said softly, "I miss you a little bit. I just got my best friend back. Remember we used to be inseparable? I don't want to go another night without my best friend."

Dammit. I knew this was going to happen, but I was still trying to process all of the new details of my life. He couldn't think that I would just go back to being his sidekick, did he? Of course he did, he was Alex after all.

"'Lex, I gotta go. See you later, okay?" I hung up before he was able to protest and flopped down onto the bed. Baltimore was not an easy place to be, and it was starting to get to me.

I really missed home...

## 12. Chapter 12

My phone rang again, and I checked the caller ID. My college friend Lauren was calling from Georgia.

"Oh my god, did you sense that I miss you?"

She laughed and I immediately felt better. My best friend was always there for me and she could always make me feel better. I missed her terribly; she was the only one of my friends who knew about my past and the shit show that was my relationship with Baltimore.

"I had a feeling," she said, "you've been gone for a few days and we never really go this long without talking. How is that amazingly hot asshole that you're trying to help out?"

She loved All Time Low and thought that Alex was amazingly attractive, but she also hated his tendency to treat me like shit. Nothing would ever make her stop loving the band though. That's actually one thing that we bonded over when we met in college. No

matter the hurt, I would always support the dreams of the boys. They all deserved the success that they had accomplished, and I was happy that my bestie was so intent on loving them.

"He's weird, this town is weird, I miss Georgia. Oh, and I slept with Zack."

"WHAT? Lucky bitch. Is he any good?"

I chuckled and turned over on the bed, settling in for a gossip session. This is what Lauren and I where good at. Shit talking and gossiping. It was so much fun. We went through some details about my experience with Zack, and soon we where laughing about some stupid girl from college.

"You need to come up here, I need you to meet the guys and I may be here awhile. I could use a roommate. By some miracle could you come stay with me?"

"I am way ahead of you, girl. Open the door."

I smiled wildly, wrapped myself in a robe, and squealed all the way to the door of my suite. Standing in front of me was my best friend. We hugged and got her settled in the second room before we ordered room service and popped in a movie. Champagne followed the food, and soon we had a good buzz. I was so happy to have her with me, and I could tell that she was both excited to see me and to meet the boys she loved.

I called Zack after the movie was over, and asked if he and the guys had plans for the night. He said that they where going to a local bar for drinks, and invited me.

"Well, my friend Lauren is here, can we both come?"

"Yeah, babe. Any friend of Rae's is a friend of ours. Isn't she a fan of ATL? I can't wait to meet her!"

I told Lauren and she smiled excitedly before ushering me into the bathroom. We got ready together, and she slipped on a burgundy dress with a lace pattern in the front. She looked amazing, and I was sure that Jack and Alex would have a fight over her. I went for a black dress and some converse, and Lauren did my hair and makeup. I felt hot, which was a first, and I hoped that this confidence would hold up around Alex. He seemed to always have a way of knocking me down.

Soon, we where loaded into our uber and headed into downtown Baltimore. It was time for my best childhood friend to meet my college bestie.

End  
file.